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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E AND AF/PD
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2019
TAGS: KPAO PREL PGOV ER
SUBJECT: MFA GRANTS FULL PERMISSION FOR PD EVENTS

REF: ASMARA 397

Classified By: CDA Melinda Tabler-Stone for reason 1.4(d).

¶11. (SBU) The embassy received a dipnote from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) on Nov 19 granting permission to resume "all public outreach programs as scheduled as of today." To our surprise, the MFA followed through that evening when notified that the Ministry of Information (MOI) had ordered the offsite venue to be locked just before the start of the PAS book club. Within minutes of the embassy's call to the MFA to voice concern, two representatives from the MFA arrived and immediately began to reprimand the venue manager.

The MFA told the manager "you have to treat the Americans well, otherwise we will lose our cultural programs in the United States." When the manager asked about the MOI, the MFA officials replied "we are in charge now."

¶12. (C) COMMENT: The MFA's actions on Nov 19 mark the first time the Eritrean government (GSE) has come to the assistance of post's PD programs. Since our initial problems with the GSE in July, the MFA has either dodged meetings or given lukewarm apologies (reftel). It was not until post threatened to prevent GSE-sponsored cultural groups from performing in the United States that Post began to see tangible results.

Tabler-Stone